1

Colonialism and national culture

> "And the whole triumphant history of culture can be understood as the history of the revelation of culture's insufficiency, as a march toward culture's self-abolition. Culture is the locus of the search for lost unity. In the course of this search, culture as a separate sphere is obliged to negate itself."
> – Guy Debord

In a 1928 speech, Nguyễn An Ninh, one of the most prominent Vietnamese intellectuals and activists during the colonial era, condemned the French administration for its arrogant attempt to "civilize" a population that already "possessed a rich civilization … when the French were still living in caves."[1] For Ninh, the mission to civilize was in reality a project promoted by the colonial government in order to dissolve the "national culture" (*văn hoá dân tộc*), depriving the Vietnamese people of the "spiritual inheritance" contained in its long national history. Insofar as this national culture constituted the "soul of the nation" itself (*văn hoá là tâm hồn của dân tộc*), the imposition of French civilization amounted to a systematic attempt to destroy the very identity of the Vietnamese people.[2]

Ninh's efforts to preserve this identity against the imperial mission to civilize correspond to what Frantz Fanon described as the attempt "to secure a national culture … against the universal condemnation of the colonizer."[3] In response to the "colonialist theory of a precolonial barbarism," used to convince the colonial subject of its lack of civilization, intellectuals throughout the colonial world engaged in the "quest for a national culture prior to the colonial era."[4]

As Fanon cautioned, however, it would be a mistake to identify this national culture with the "mummified fragments" of a fixed

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 23 15/08/2019 11:28

or unchanging tradition. Such a reified conception of culture fails to consider the way in which new "modes of thought, language [and] … modern techniques of communication … have dialectically reorganized the mind of the people."[5] As such, it "is not enough to reunite with the people in a past where they no longer exist."[6] Rather, the people require a national history that can be appropriated creatively in response to the needs of the present, a present defined by European imperialism. The "colonized intellectual," therefore, must use "the past … with the intention of opening up the future, of spurring [the people] into action and fostering hope" in the future, a future in which the people recovers its national sovereignty.[7] Without a national culture, tied to a past that can open itself to the future, the people exist only as "individuals without an anchorage, without borders, colorless, stateless, rootless, a body of angels."[8]

As Ninh argued, similarly, the national culture of the Vietnamese people should not be conceived as a civilization that is fixed for eternity. Rather, culture, according to Ninh, consists of "all the potential [*tiềm năng*] that the nation has left … in the course of its history," a potential that can be actualized by the people in response to its present condition. The national culture, therefore, is not an unchanging tradition. Rather, it is "eternal" only insofar as it can be appropriated continually as a living tradition by those who inherit it in the present: "To speak of the eternity [*sự trường tồn*] of a … culture … is to speak of the vitality of a people … And the Vietnamese people have had the vitality to create such a culture."[9]

Civilization and culture

But if the civilizing mission, according to Ninh, was an attempt to subjugate the Vietnamese people by erasing the national history, this history, nevertheless, was a product of European imperialism. As Dương Quảng Hàm pointed out in a pedagogical text that was widely circulated in colonial schools, the Vietnamese people did not possess a national history prior to the introduction of French civilization:

> [N]ational history must be considered among the most important of subjects taught in … school. This pedagogical truth, so evident all on its own, was nevertheless unknown to Annamites before the arrival of the French. In the traditional Annamite curriculum, in fact, pupils only study the Chinese chronicles: the history of Annam was not mentioned …[10]

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 24 15/08/2019 11:28

In spite of its self-evidence, then, the existence of an eternal Vietnamese culture was completely unknown to Annamites prior to the colonial period. Indeed, as Ninh admitted in an earlier speech, delivered in 1923, the very concept of culture was one that could not be conveyed in the "Annamite language," a language that, at the time, possessed no equivalent to the word *culture* in French. In order to speak, therefore, of a Vietnamese culture, Ninh, despite rejecting the claim that the French possessed a superior civilization, was compelled to communicate in the more civilized language of the colonizer:

> I must promise you that it is not for me a matter of pride that I speak with Annamites in French. The Annamite language is still so backward and is far from the level of European languages, of the languages of East Asia. I have tried … to translate into Annamite the word culture and have not succeeded in finding a word … The words *cầm kỳ thi họa* gives us an idea of culture, but an inadequate idea and one at risk of erroneous interpretation. *Cầm* is music, *kỳ* intellectual speculation, *thi* is literature, and *họa*, painting. We would be forced into adopting the composite word *chúng đọc học thức*. Those who can find the correct word might be kind enough to show me forbearance on this previous point.[11]

If the Vietnamese, therefore, had already developed a civilization when the French were living in caves, their language, nevertheless, compared with that of the colonizer, was "still so backwards," insofar as it had not yet developed an expression for *culture*.

The concept of culture, however, which Ninh perceived as the sign of a superior civilization, was a relatively recent invention in the languages spoken in Europe. According to Theodor Adorno, the use of the word "culture" to refer to "so many things lacking a common denominator … such as philosophy … religion, science and art … conduct and mores … and finally … the objective spirit of an age … is scarcely older than Kant." Derived from the Latin *cultura*, which denoted the cultivation of land, the word "culture," beginning in the eighteenth century, would be used "to connote the idea of *niveau* and cultivation … in contrast to the sphere of entertainment."[12] In German, the term *Kultur* came to refer to both the education (or *Bildung*) of the individual, as well as to a society's state of the development, a usage that would later inform the meaning of "culture" in English and French.[13]

In the East Asian languages, on the other hand, "the modern notion *wenhua* or culture resulted from the recent history of East-West encounter." According to Lydia Liu, the word *wenhua* was first employed as a

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 25 15/08/2019 11:28

translation for "culture" in the early twentieth century, when Chinese intellectuals confronted the threat of European imperialism. In East Asia, therefore, the concept of culture emerged "as a privileged sphere of discourse in a time of colonialist … expansion."[14]

Prior to this period, the word *wen* – the root of *wenhua* or "culture" – referred to the cultivated activities of the Confucian elite. *Wen* was used to describe scholar-officials engaged in "civil" administration, as opposed to "military" (*wu*) affairs. Whereas *wen*, as Tze-Ki Hon describes, referred "to a gradual process of education, persuasion, and negotiation that ends in consensus," *wu* "suggest[ed] the direct control of the rulers without any regard for … the ruled." The word *wen*, therefore, originally denoted rulership through "civil" techniques of control, rather than "coercion based on brute force."[15] Thus, the older usage of *wen* implies an intrinsic connection between the cultural and political spheres, confirming Adorno's assertion that: "Whoever speaks of culture speaks of administration as well."[16]

Combined with the particle *hua* (*hoá* in Vietnamese), connoting "the transformation of human behavior," *wenhua* would be used in the twentieth century to refer to the "civil process of transformation whereby … disparate individuals become a self-conscious group."[17] In the work of Chinese nationalist scholars such as Liu Yizheng, *wenhua* was used to develop a conception of "Chinese culture" as a system that is "open to change … yet remain[ing] constant." To borrow Fanon's definition of "national culture," Chinese intellectuals, confronting the threat of Western imperialism, rediscovered a national past "with the intention of opening up the future."[18]

In the Vietnamese context, *wenhua* would be adapted in the Vietnamese language in the 1920s and 1930s as *văn hoá*, supplanting Ninh's neologism, *chúng đọc học thức*, as the common expression for "culture." Ninh's unsuccessful attempt to devise a translation for culture, however, remains instructive in the way that it underscores the discrepancy between the modern conception of culture and its counterparts within Vietnamese "civilization." In the passage quoted above, Ninh at first considers, as a translation for *culture* in French, the Sino-Vietnamese expression *cầm kỳ thi họa*, which refers to the "four refined arts" or "leisure time pleasures" of the Confucian literati.[19] This expression, however, is inadequate precisely insofar as these arts are associated with the *civilization* of the scholar-elite, as opposed to a national culture belonging to the Vietnamese people in general. In order to avoid this "erroneous interpretation," therefore, Ninh proposes *chúng đọc học*

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 26 15/08/2019 11:28

thức ("reading, studying and thinking together"). Combining a series of common Vietnamese terms, the new expression, as Judith Henchy has noted, connotes a "national pedagogical project," as opposed to an individual process of self-cultivation, separating a group of Sinicized scholar-elite from the commoners, ruled by techniques of "civility" (*văn*).[20]

Colonialism, surveillance and media

During the early colonial era, this older mode of civility was gradually eroded by the colonial state, in its imperial mission to civilize Vietnamese civilization, through the introduction of new forms of modern mass media. By 1918, the French had completely abolished the Confucian examinations through which scholar-officials were recruited to serve in the civil administration of the imperial court. "When the French first arrived … Confucianism [*nho học*]," as the South Vietnamese philosopher Nguyễn Văn Trung described, "embodied the anti-French spirit of the literati, so they opposed Confucianism, advocated its abolition, because the Chinese script [*chữ nho*] and Confucianism … was viewed as … harmful to the policy … of assimilation."[21] In their place, a system of colonial schools was established in which French and *quốc ngữ*, the Romanized vernacular script developed by Jesuit priests in the seventeenth century, would replace instruction in Chinese characters and the interpretation of classical texts. According to Benedict Anderson, these language policies were "consciously promoted to break … links with China … and … also with the indigenous past … by making dynastic records and ancient literatures inaccessible to a new generation of colonized Vietnamese."[22] "Initially, the French used the *quốc ngữ* as a weapon of spiritual invasion [*xâm lược tinh thần*], to isolate the people from the … tradition associated with Confucianism" (*nho học*).[23]

During the same period, the establishment of an indigenous press in the vernacular script was sponsored by the colonial secret police as a means of monitoring the attitudes and activities of organizations opposed to the French.[24] As Louis Marty, the head of the *Sûreté*, explained in a memo, this plan would largely succeed in its goal of creating a modern mass media in the Vietnamese language in order serve as an instrument of surveillance for the colonial state. Before World War I, "secret societies" that opposed the colonial government had communicated through banners and seals emblazoned with anti-colonial slogans inscribed in Chinese. By 1918, these societies had been replaced by a "no longer

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 27 15/08/2019 11:28

secret" "native opposition," "expressed through newspapers written in French and Romanized script."[25]

This new media, however, not only provided a means of publicizing the private political views of the Vietnamese people, it also *produced* the very "public opinion" (*công luận* or *dư luận*) that this media allowed the secret police to surveil.[26] As Anderson noted, "government publication[s] … [in] *quoc ngu* … significantly accelerated the spread of this European-invented script, unintentionally helping to turn it … into the popular medium for the expression of Vietnamese cultural (and national) solidarity."[27] As a vernacular script, this popular medium (which the French had promoted in order to sever the ties between the elite and its traditional modes of civility) was much easier to master than the classical system of characters. By "simplify[ing] the problems of mass education," the *quốc ngữ*, according to David Marr, helped to "bring elite and popular experiences … together," facilitating its use not only as a means of self-cultivation, but also for pursuing a "national pedagogical project."[28] The media, then, which had been originally established in order to "kill the patriotism" of the Confucian elite,[29] would become a means of "saving the nation through a path of culture" (*cứu nước bằng đường lối văn hóa*), promoting "nationalism through language" (*chủ nghĩa quốc gia bằng ngôn ngữ*).[30]

This development was observed with apprehension by the secret police. The creation of a modern indigenous media had not only exposed the old secret societies to the surveillance of the colonial state, it had also begun to unite the disparate groups of "feudal" elite into a broader coalition against the colonial state:

> Annamite society was, before the war, a handful of individuals from which emerged several feudal families. I indicated that these times had passed and that new groupings have been formed … the most important groups having a newspaper. The new development, considerable, to which I draw your attention, is that these groups, competitors as late as last year, are tending to jam together closely to make up a tightly-knit opposition.[31]

During the colonial era, therefore, a modern sphere of *publicity* was established in part as a technique of *surveillance*, imposed as a means of controlling the very national culture whose condition it also created. This indigenous media – which would constitute, as Anderson famously called it, the "imagined community" of the Vietnamese nation – was originally intended to serve as an instrument to divide and to conquer the very national culture it would help to imagine.[32]

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 28 15/08/2019 11:28

Imprinting popular sovereignty

In the 1920s and 1930s, this national culture, promoted by the colonial state in order to separate the colonial subject from its own civilized past, would serve to create a new Vietnamese "people" (*dân tộc*) by providing the latter with a national history, previously "unknown to the Annamites." This new history was based upon categories derived from Western historiography. Rejecting the traditional view of the state, which emphasized the personal relationship between ruler and subject (*vua-tôi*), historians adopted a modern conception of sovereignty as the right of a national people over the territory that it historically occupied.

Reworking an older imperial discourse of civility, which the French had tried to erase by creating a new indigenous media culture, Vietnamese writers began to refer to the people as *dân*, a term which originally denoted "children of the ruler." In the new national histories written in the vernacular script, the word was first used to "imply a common ethnic identity. The next step," as David Marr describes, "was to give *dân* the meaning 'citizens of the modern state.'"[33] The "people," then, who had appeared in the dynastic records (which had increasingly become inaccessible) only as subjects of the sovereign, would emerge within the new national history as the very foundation of sovereignty itself, a "sovereignty of the people" (*dân quyền*).[34] "Without the people (*nhân dân*)," as the reformist leader Phan Bội Châu observed, "there would be no territory (*đất đai*), [thus] sovereignty (*chủ quyền*) could not be established."[35]

In the literature of the period, moreover, the individuals forming this new sovereign people began to refer to themselves using a new first person singular: the *tôi*. Derived from the "ruler-subject" relation (*vua-tôi*), the *tôi*, as Marr describes, was "upgraded," politically, during the colonial era, and used to refer to a self that existed independently of its relationship of subordination ~~within~~ the emperor and the imperial court. The *tôi*, then, no longer denoted a subject of the king, but was used instead to signify something more closely resembling what Michel Foucault called the "sovereign subject" or the "enslaved sovereign,"[36] an autonomous individual subordinated to its own moral conscience (to its "tribunal of the heart" (*tòa án lương tâm*), to borrow an expression used by writers during the 1920s and 1930s).[37]

Adopting the modern conception of a sovereign national subject, Vietnamese writers, working in the popular medium of vernacular print, appropriated the past in light of the colonial present as a long historical prelude to the contemporary anti-colonial struggle. Events recorded in

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 29 15/08/2019 11:28

dynastic accounts memorializing the deeds of ancient heroes and sovereigns were rewritten as the 2,000-year history of a people united in an ongoing struggle to defend its national sovereignty against all foreign invaders (*truyền thống anh hùng chống ngoại xâm*).[38]

One of the most influential examples of this wholesale revision of the indigenous past was the new nationalist reading of the "The Proclamation of the Pacification of the Marauding Ngô" (*Bình ngô đại cáo*), a work that Phạm Văn Đồng described as "the great immortal song of our people" (*khúc ca hùng tráng bất hủ của dân tộc ta*).[39] The text was written by the scholar Nguyễn Trãi for the emperor Lê Lợi, following his victory in 1428 against an occupying army dispatched by the Ming Dynasty.[40] During the colonial era, the "Proclamation" would come to be seen as a Vietnamese "declaration of independence" (*tuyên bố độc lập*), affirming the cultural identity and national sovereignty of the Vietnamese people against Chinese imperialism.[41] The "Proclamation" was "intended as a declaration of independence for the Vietnamese people and as an affirmation of viability of a separate national culture."[42]

In the text itself, however, the "sovereignty" – or "imperial rule" (*đế*) – that Lê Lợi proclaims is not that of a nation-state (*quốc gia*) defined by a unique ethnic identity.[43] This sovereignty, in other words, is not asserted on the basis of a *cultural* difference, separating the Vietnamese people from the empire seeking to dominate it. The text, therefore, does not declare a "popular sovereignty" (*dân quyền*), reflecting the will of an ethnic or national people, a *dân tộc*. Instead of this modern expression, the text refers to *ngã dân*, a term that, according to Liam C. Kelley, "literally means 'my people' … and is thus similar to a European absolute monarch's view of 'my subjects.'"[44] In the text, Lê Lợi is speaking, therefore, not as a representative of a sovereign national people, but as their imperial ruler. This gesture is consistent with the description of the role of king in official court chronicles: "Heaven created the people and gave them a king in order to guide them, not to serve them."[45]

Furthermore, the text does not invoke a separate and unique Vietnamese "culture" (*văn hóa*), but refers only to individual "customs" (*phong tục*). While customs, as the "Proclamation" asserts, distinguish the territories (or "mountains and rivers") ruled by the two sovereign "kingdoms" or "courts" (*quốc*) ("Vietnam" and "China"), these differences, nevertheless, do not imply a lack of *civilization*: "Our kingdom of Đại Việt is truly a domain of civility [*văn hiến chi bang*]. Just as its territorial areas are distinct, so are the customs of the South and North also different."[46]

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 30 15/08/2019 11:28

Thus, the sovereignty that Lê Lợi declares is based not on *cultural* difference, but on a shared *civilization*, one that exists, so the text asserts, in both northern and southern domains of civility, in spite of the difference in custom between their imperial subjects. In proclaiming the sovereignty of his kingdom, therefore, Lê Lợi does not appeal to the culture created by an indigenous people during the course of its national history. Instead, he evokes a legitimate record of dynastic succession, in order to indicate that his subjects, while they differ in custom from their counterparts in the North, are ruled by a separate but equally civilized court in the South: "It was the Triệu, the Đinh, the Lý and Trần, who in succession built this kingdom [*quốc*]. Even as the Han, the Tang, the Sung and Yuan, each was sovereign [*đế*] in its own domain."[47]

During the early twentieth century, such precolonial texts as the "Proclamation" would be "reinterpreted," as Kelley has argued, from the perspective of the colonial situation, "in order to give people in the present hope for the future."[48] To borrow Fanon's description of national culture, Vietnamese intellectuals used "the past … with the intention of opening up the future, of spurring [the people] into action and fostering hope." As Nguyễn Văn Trung pointed out, this hope was identified with the development of the new vernacular media, which the French had employed in order to erase Vietnamese civilization: "Vietnamese … in a situation in which the nation had been lost, could look to … the [new system of] writing as a means of … constructing a future for the people [*xây dựng tương lai dân tộc*] through language and culture." At "the beginning" of the colonial era, then, "patriots opposed [the *quốc ngữ*] because it was used by the colonialists as an instrument of spiritual invasion … but later we appropriated it, turning it into a tool for inciting patriotism, for cultural education directed especially at the ordinary people" (*tầng lớp bình dân*).[49]

This process of revision would eventually produce what William Turley described as a national "image of heroic resistance to foreign rule," and the "myth of indomitability in the face of superior force."[50] As an image inspiring hope for the future, this myth of the national past as a perennial war of anti-imperialism, waged by a people whose culture had existed for thousands of years, was largely a projection of the colonial present. As Pierre Asselin has argued:

> The uprisings that took place during the millennium of Chinese domination … were typically localized … they were not nationwide resistance efforts fueled by nationalistic … sentiment. … The underlying claim that

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 31 15/08/2019 11:28

> Vietnamese developed through these resistance efforts … an acute sense of nationalism … early in their history is simply untrue. Average Vietnamese at the time were unable to even fathom the meaning of 'nation,' as their world rarely extended beyond her native villages.[51]

In the early twentieth century, however, the nation, which the Vietnamese had previously been unable to fathom, and whose history was formerly "unknown to the Annamites," would be "imprinted" into the minds of the Vietnamese people. "[P]eople," as the reformist intellectual Hoàng Đạo Thành argued, "should be made to learn the nation's literature, and its history":

> [F]or this is how we can get the word, "nation" [*quốc gia*], imprinted [*ấn*] in each person's brain. It must be made firm there so that it … cannot come loose. Thereupon they will view the nation's territory as their own property, and will treat their countrymen as compatriots.[52]

This process of imprinting the nation was made possible by the creation of a new vernacular media, established by the colonial government in order to monitor public opinion. As Louis Marty observed, it was this development that allowed the Vietnamese to transcend the localized forms of resistance to which they were limited before the establishment of an indigenous press as a technique of surveillance. This press would transform "Annamite society" from a "handful of individuals from … feudal families" into "a tightly-knit opposition," capable of imagining itself and its national history through the popular medium of print.[53] By allowing the Vietnamese to imagine their "countrymen as compatriots," sharing a national culture and history, this print media would create the conditions for the rise of a sovereign national people, a *dân tộc* that had never existed before.

In Vietnam, therefore, the introduction of new "modes of thought, language [and] … modern techniques of communication" did not simply serve – to recall Fanon's account of national culture – as something that "dialectically reorganized the mind of the people."[54] Rather, *the people as such* were created as an unintended effect of the new forms of media used to disseminate a national culture, a culture that, according to Ninh, constituted the "soul of the people" as such. In the words of Nguyễn Văn Trung, "patriots took the *quốc ngữ* out of the hands of the colonialists, turning it into a weapon to inspire the national soul [*lòng yêu nước*] [and] to resist the French."[55] As a result, the "fate of the people [*dân tộc*] became connected to … great works" of literature. "So long as the great work remains, so do the people" (*Tác phẩm tuyệt hảo còn, dân tộc vẫn*

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 32 15/08/2019 11:28

còn).[56] Insofar as the media that created the nation culture was established by the colonial state as a form of mass observation, this soul of the nation, to borrow Foucault's description of the Enlightenment notion of man, was produced as the "correlative of a certain technology of power." "The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy."[57]

National culture and war

By the end of the colonial era, the national culture that had emerged as an unintended effect of the mission to civilize was firmly imprinted in the minds of a majority of the educated elite in Vietnam. This culture is officially recognized in the constitutions adopted by the two Vietnamese states that emerged in the wake of the Geneva Accords in 1954, which divided the nation at the seventeenth parallel. In the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the culture that had been created by a national history that was previously "unknown to Annamites," is invoked as the historical justification for proclaiming a modern national sovereignty: "In the course of their millennia old history, the Vietnamese people, working … creatively … to construct and defend their country, have forged a unified national tradition [*truyền thống đoàn kết … của dân tộc*] … that has created Vietnamese culture [*văn hiến*]."[58] Similarly, in the constitution of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), the myth of a 2,000-year national history, fabricated during the colonial period for the purpose of inspiring hope for the future, is repeated in the following fashion: The "glorious and eternal future of the Vietnamese nation and people [*Quốc gia và Dân tộc Việt Nam*] … has been guaranteed by the heroic history of struggle of our ancestors."[59] In the two constitutions, therefore, the legitimacy of the postcolonial state is founded upon the assertion that it fulfills the hope for the future, projected into the precolonial past, in the myth of a people united in its ancient anti-imperialist struggle.

During the Vietnam War, the strategy employed by the communist forces involved the mass dissemination of a vernacular media, originally created as a tool of surveillance, in order to imprint the idea of the nation on the Vietnamese masses. Insofar as the process of imprinting was intended to serve as a means of producing the people as such, this strategy paradoxically amounted to an attempt by the postcolonial state to create the very popular sovereignty upon which it is founded. In this strategy, then, the Vietnamese people appear as both the subject and object of the war. The legitimacy of the state is based on the 2,000-year history of a national culture, which the state itself would impose on the

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 33 15/08/2019 11:28

population as a means of creating the national people that constitutes its authority.

In the people's war waged by the communist forces, this cultural struggle was combined with a broader plan for social and economic development, which included the construction of schools and public works programs and the formation of local militias. For the communist forces, then, the war was not simply an armed insurrection, employing unconventional tactics of violence and terror. Rather, the war would also be waged as a social and cultural revolution, mobilizing the masses in the creation of new social and political structures, structures that, in turn, would serve to sustain the insurgency.

The armed struggle, then, was conceived as one component within an integral war waged on a series of interconnected fronts. These included what Hồ Chí Minh called the "cultural front" (*mặt trận văn hoá*), a battlefield in which "the pen is a sharp weapon, the newspaper a revolutionary instrument" ("*cái bút là vũ khí sắc bén, bài báo là tờ hịch cách mạng*").[60] The media, then, as a cultural weapon, would be used to create a "culture of the masses" (*văn hóa quần chúng*): Our "way of speaking … [writing] newspapers … all have to conform to this principle: everything from out of the masses" (*từ trong quần chúng ra*)."[61] Derived from the masses themselves, this popular culture would serve to empower the Vietnamese people as a political subject. The "culture of the masses" would be deployed by the Party as a means of molding the masses to serve as an instrument and effect of a political power. Hồ Chí Minh, therefore, called for the "promotion of cultural work in order to train a new people [*đào tạo con người mới*] … for the national war of resistance."[62] As both a means of empowering the people and a political instrument of the state, imposed upon the population, this "culture for the masses" could be characterized in Foucaultian terms as a technique of "subjectivization."

On the cultural front, then, the "people's war" practiced by the insurgency constituted a form of governmentality that was productive of the very "people" the Party sought to both politically manage and mobilize. As the Dương Thu Hương describes in *Novel without a Name*, this process was one in which the political image of the Vietnamese nation and its glorious national history were embedded in individual memory as a technique of internal repression. Through state propaganda and the staging of political spectacles, the glorious image of the Vietnamese Revolution would be imprinted upon the mind as a form of surveillance, creating a sense of group solidarity, constitutive of a political subject. This solidarity was based on a shared sense of guilt, created by an internalized image

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 34 15/08/2019 11:28

of the nation, a image that served to control individuals through their own self-supervision, while transforming them into historical subjects, engaged in a glorious national struggle:

> We were drawn toward a great mission, a blinding glory (*vinh quang sáng chói*). The war was not simply a struggle against foreign invaders (*cuộc chiến đấu chống quân xâm lược*). Vietnam had been chosen by history (*đã được lịch sử chọn lựa*) … As we plunged deeper into the war, the memory of the day we enlisted sank deeper [into our minds]. The more we were tortured by the consciousness of our appalling indifference, the more searing the memory … We had renounced everything for glory. It was this guilt that bound us to one another … tightly …[63]

This technique of governmentality, in which the spectacle of political power is imposed on the masses as an internalized form of surveillance, corresponds to Foucault's account of "the Napoleonic character." In this account, Napoleon appears as a transitional historical figure, combining the spectacular grandeur of the monarchical state with the more mundane techniques of panopticism, which emerged in the era of industrial capitalism. In Foucault's terms, this sovereign figure constitutes:

> the point of junction of the monarchical, ritual exercise of sovereignty and the … permanent exercise of indefinite discipline. He is the individual who looms over everything with a single gaze which no detail, however minute, can escape … As a monarch who is at one and the same time a usurper of the ancient throne and the organizer of the new state … [combining] the necessarily spectacular manifestations of power … [and] the daily exercise of surveillance, in a panopticism in which the vigilance of intersecting gazes was soon to render useless both the eagle and the sun.[64]

In his account of the cult of personality employed by the Communist Party, the Vietnamese Marxist philosopher, Trần Đức Thảo, paints a strikingly similar portrait of Hồ Chí Minh. Like the Napoleonic character, Hồ was a paradoxical figure who combined the modern ideal of democracy with the "spectacular manifestations of power" associated with the sovereignty of the premodern state. According to Thảo, Hồ's modest demeanor and style did not simply imply a democratic rejection of the ostentatious display of authority, which had been the prerogative of the feudal nobility. On the contrary, Hồ's self-effacing appearance was in reality a "self-glorifying publicity" (*sự công khai tự tôn vinh mình*), a "well-crafted work of art [*một công trình nghệ thuật*] … staged in order to elevate 'Uncle [Hồ]' as an exalted, majestic leader." This image was produced by a elaborate "propaganda machine"

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 35 15/08/2019 11:28

(*bộ máy tuyên truyền*), operated by specialists in the Party engaged on the cultural front, producing poetry, proverbs and morality tales to be attributed to the president. Every detail of Hồ's public persona "bore the stamp of a sophisticated psychological method [*phương pháp tâm lý*] for cultivating a leader."[65]

Hồ's humble appearance, therefore, was not a spontaneous sign of humility, one that was opposed to the "ritual exercise of sovereignty." Rather, his popular style was carefully calculated to produce the impression of power, and precisely over the people before whom he appeared to humble himself: "This manner of dressing in order to deliberately create a 'popular' [image] among politicians, or among the people, was a technique for commanding the highest respect" (*một cách tự tôn rất cao siêu*). Hồ's populism, therefore, was an image intended precisely to set him apart from the people, in order to dominate them in the name of their own popular sovereignty: "All of the gestures … in each picture … had been carefully researched, meticulously staged from the beginning [*dàn dựng tỉ mỉ từ trước*], so that his image [*hình ảnh*] would not be submerged by the ordinary people around him!"[66]

Like the spectacular manifestations of sovereignty deployed by the Napoleonic regime, Hồ's popular image was the instrument of an absolute power exercised in the name of the people. As the cultivated appearance of a sovereign portraying himself as a peasant (a "'king' [*ông vua*] … with the ambition of becoming a [modern] revolutionary"), Hồ's "proletarian … aura" (*hào quang … vô sản*) was an image imposed by a democratic dictatorship in which the proletariat is dominated by its own representation:

> [H]is common sandals … the way he would leave a few buttons open on his shirt … how he would hold his burning cigarette … these were ways of displaying that he had been chosen. These details created an … aura of the proletarian revolution [*hào quang của cách mạng vô sản*]! His cheap, ordinary looking pith helmet, made of shoddy fabric, was precisely his crown![67]

In the cult of personality, through which Hồ established himself as a proletarian king, a "self-glorifying publicity," borrowed from older imperial statecraft, was projected by a modern propaganda machine as a means of imposing a panoptic surveillance on the population at large. The Party, as Thảo explains:

> wanted to elevate 'Uncle [Ho],' to make him stand out … just like an eagle, flying above the top of Thái Sơn … looking down at the political landscape below with suspicious, contemptuous eyes, with the most exact gaze, pen-

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 36 15/08/2019 11:28

> etrating the mind of each individual … in order to distinguish supporters and potential enemies …[68]

Like the Napoleonic character, then, Hồ appears as a figure combining the "spectacular manifestations of power … [and] the daily exercise of surveillance," serving as the image of an absolute sovereign who "looms over everything with a single gaze which no detail … can escape."

In the *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord refers to this technique of state power as the "concentrated spectacle," a form of domination that "belongs essentially to bureaucratic capitalism." The technique entails the projection of an "imposed image of the good," embodied in a single individual who, elevated to the status of an "absolute star" with whom "[e]veryone must magically identify," functions as an internalized form of repression.[69] In North Vietnam, this function was fulfilled by the figure of Hồ Chí Minh: "everything worthy, everything good, everything that has value … must belong to "Uncle [Hồ],' to the Party."[70] By "giv[ing] an acceptable meaning to … absolute exploitation," this absolute celebrity serves as "the guarantee of totalitarian cohesion." In Debord's analysis, then, the cult of personality is the spectacle deployed by a totalitarian state to impose a universal surveillance: "Wherever the concentrated spectacle rules, so does the police."[71]

Democracy, discipline and the second Southward Advance

The Republic of Vietnam was established in 1955 by its first president, Ngô Đình Diệm, in a fraudulent referendum that removed the puppet emperor Bảo Đại from his position as head of the State of Vietnam.[72] Contrary to what many have argued, Diệm's presidency was not engineered by the American government.[73] Nor was he "unknown even in Vietnam" before his purportedly sudden appearance on the political scene.[74] Rather, he was recognized by both Bảo Đại and Hồ Chí Minh as a capable and talented leader. Diệm, therefore, as Edward Miller argues, had neither been "plucked from obscurity nor installed in office by the United States."[75]

While Diệm, moreover, during his exile in the early 1950s, succeeded in establishing contact with prominent American leaders, his brother, Ngô Đình Nhu, would become an important political figure in the South. Contrary to the pervasive image of the Vietnamese leader as "a proto-Fascist and mentally unstable drug addict,"[76] a "Vietnamese Rasputin,"[77] who had "something frightening in his face, an air of Machiavellian

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 37 15/08/2019 11:28

mystery and cynical vanity, wicked intelligence and calculated malice,"[78] Nhu had lived an ascetic existence, prior to beginning his political career.[79] Trained at the prestigious École Nationale des Chartes, Nhu, who was the school's first Annamite student, graduated third in his class.[80] While working as an archivist in Hà Nội, he was evaluated by Paul Boudet, director of the Indochinese Archives and Libraries Department, as "a young civil servant of the highest quality, combining the virtues of resoluteness and straightforwardness with a wide culture and impeccable professional abilities." [81] In the 1950s, Nhu, inspired by the writings of French syndicalist thinkers, would become as one of the most effective political organizers in the country, establishing the Cần Lao Party, which would play a significant role in Diệm's ascendance to power:[82] As the British correspondent Michael Field recalled, Nhu "was undoubtedly one of the most astute Vietnamese politicians of his generation. It was probably Ngo Dinh Nhu who created the situation in 1954 in which his elder brother was the most obvious candidate for the premiership."[83]

In spite of its undemocratic beginnings, moreover, Diệm's "Personalist" Republic, according to the US Ambassador Frederick Nolting, was not a fascist dictatorship. Rather, it was a government that employed authoritarian measures in an effort to create the conditions for a modern democracy: "I never felt that [Diệm] wanted to maintain an autocracy." He "was dedicated to the long range aim of a self-representative … democratic system," while recognizing that "you had to build the infrastructure of democracy before … [democracy] would mean anything … and strangely enough, I think his brother Nhu was even more anxious to introduce self-government measures, although he had the reputation of being just the reverse."[84]

Dedicated to the long-range goal of democracy, Diệm, then, in the early part of his presidency, proposed a program of "national discipline" (*kỷ luật quốc gia*) as a means of building the infrastructure for a representative government. At a National Assembly meeting in 1957, Diệm defined this "disciplined national freedom" (*kỷ luật quốc gia tự do ưng thuận*) as a self-imposed form of civic surveillance:

> [T]he characteristic of civilized nations is the establishment of a discipline by themselves which they observe freely and loyally. If the authorities must intervene each moment to watch the conduct of each one and punish the infringements of the rules … where would freedom be? There is only one way of avoiding that intervention: each one must accept this discipline and see to it that his compatriots do the same. … If to that sense of discipline we add a sense of sacrifice … then I can assure you that although we are at

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 38 15/08/2019 11:28

> present a backward country ruined by a prolonged war, we can occupy in … short time a good place among the Asian countries in the competition for economic development.[85]

For Diệm, then, "national discipline," as a form of surveillance that is internalized by the masses ("each one must accept this discipline" and observe their own conduct), was not merely a negative technique of repression. Rather, it was a constitutive condition of both political freedom and economic development, which in "civilized nations" is based on a self-imposed vigilance, observed "freely and loyally" by each individual.

The program of national discipline to establish a Western-style democracy would be accompanied by the creation of what Nhu described as a "'mixed economy,' i.e., partly state and partly private control." This economy, as Nhu explained to US officials in the 1950s, would constitute a "third way" between "communism … [and] western liberal capitalism" (adding, however, that the latter "doctrine was associate[d]" in the developing world "with colonialism"). Just as national discipline, then, would be employed by the state to achieve the "long range aim of a self-representative … democratic system," so, in the plan for contructing a "mixed economy," a "system of state control" would be used to develop a Western-style liberal economy based on free private enterprise.[86]

In this program to develop the nation, the internal connection that the Ngos emphasized between freedom and discipline, economic liberalism and centralized planning, would appear to conform to Foucault's characterization of the "dark side" of the European Enlightenment and the parliamentary state. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the establishment of a popular sovereignty, a "representative regime" in which "the will of all … form[s] the fundamental authority of sovereignty" was supported by the "development … disciplinary mechanisms."[87] The rise of the constitutional state, based the sovereign will of the people, was tied to the emergence of a "panoptic machine," deployed in the prison, the school and the factory, subjecting the masses to a universal surveillance. The democratic expansion of the right to representation was dependent, therefore, upon a "despotic" technique of mass visibility, affording a "single individual" an "instantaneous view of a great multitude."[88] The "'Enlightenment', which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines."[89]

For Diệm, similarly, discipline was not simply a technique of repression that is employed exclusively by authoritarian states. Rather, the

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 39 15/08/2019 11:28

connection between the liberties and disciplines is also inherent in liberal democracy:

> [D]iscipline is necessary [not] only in planned economies. Even in countries believing in liberalism, this discipline is indispensable, because in the present state of affairs all economic activity is subject to the exigencies of technique which is imposed upon each of us and prevents him from acting too independently.[90]

For Diệm, then, the representative form of the "civilized" state, inherited from the European Enlightenment, is not a democracy that is devoid of all despotism. Rather, this form of democracy presupposes a "disciplined freedom" in which the sovereignty of the people is based upon their subjection to a disciplinary technique of mass observation.

This paradoxical notion of constitutional government, as founded on a national people, subjectivized by a state that embodies its popular sovereignty, was widely dismissed by critics of the regime as "diemocracy," as authoritarian rule disguised as democracy. For many observers, as Catton points out, the Republic's attempt to mobilize the Vietnamese masses, "in an imitation of the 'Front' strategy employed by the Communists," "were more reminiscent of politics in a people's republic then a democracy; they were creations of the state rather than reflections of the popular will."[91] Meanwhile, Nhu's attempt to apply the techniques of socialist planning in order to create a Western-style liberal economy sparked rumors that his clandestine political party, the Cần Lao, "was trying to monopolize all business and industry in the country."[92]

But if the "diemocracy" of the early Republic was not simply a cover for authoritarian rule, but a political program "dedicated to the long-range aim" of a representative government, the program, nevertheless, would appear to imply what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called a "historicist" denial of the modernity of non-Western peoples. Thus, while the Ngos, as Philip Catton has noted, extolled the egalitarian virtues of the Vietnamese peasantry, they also "believed that it would take time before they could … assume the responsibilities of citizenship."[93] But in that case, the program to establish an infrastructure for a Western-style democracy would appear to entail a "recommendation to the colonized to wait," repeating the familiar imperialist gesture of consigning the colonized to an "imaginary waiting room of history."[94]

This Western ideal of modernity, defined by a doctrine of "western liberal capitalism … associate[d] … with colonialism," and by an Enlightened form of democracy, based on the modern apparatus of

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 40 15/08/2019 11:28

discipline, is one that Diệm and his brother, however, would come to repudiate. During the course of the war, the Ngos, under the pressure of both the insurgency and US imperialism, would come to espouse a more radical notion of democratic self-government and economic organization, one that was more closely aligned with the political philosophy, proclaimed as the Republic's ideological basis. By the 1960s, the Ngos would view the establishment of a constitutional government, "adopting institutions of parliamentary democracy from [Western] liberal states" as only a preliminary stage in a broader Personalist revolution. The transformation in the political superstructure, effected in the 1955 Referendum, would be accompanied by a "second revolution, building a genuine democracy in the infrastructure. This was the Strategic Hamlet Program … also known as the rural revolution."[95]

This program entailed a strategy similar to the one employed by the insurgency in the South, a strategy that Catton describes as "an anti-Communist version of a 'people's war,' based on a militarily and politically mobilized population."[96] Like the communist program of social revolution, the counterinsurgency campaign would combine tactics of irregular warfare with the creation of a new social and political order, pursuing a policy of pacification through social and economic development. The strategy, then, was not "just a security measure against the VC [Viet Cong]; it was the vehicle for a full-scale political and social revolution."[97]

Just as the war, moreover, was portrayed by the communists as a continuation of the 2,000-year "struggle of the Vietnamese people against foreign invaders" (*chiến đấu chống quân xâm lược*), so the counterinsurgency program would be set "within a panoramic vision of the nation's historical development."[98] This vision, however, would underline an aspect of the national history, invented during the colonial era, that was deemphasized in the communist account of the latter: the *nam tiến* or the "Southward Advance."[99]

In the early twentieth century, writers who were reworking the precolonial past from the perspective of the colonial present began to conceive of the history of the Vietnamese people in terms of two interrelated phenomena. According to Li Tana, historians "suggested that all Vietnamese history before the nineteenth century can be summed up in two phrases: *Bắc cự* (resistance to the North, meaning China) and *Nam tiến* (expansion to the South). If *Bắc cự* aimed at insuring Vietnamese survival in regard to China, then *Nam tiến* was necessary for Vietnamese development."[100] The *nam tiến*, then, refers to the myth of the "march to the

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 41 15/08/2019 11:28

south" by the Vietnamese people, who, in the course of seven centuries, resisted Chinese imperialism while expanding their national sovereignty over the territory extending from the Red River to the Mekong Delta.

But just as the idea of the *bắc cự* had emerged from a wholesale revision of the indigenous past as a national history of resistance to foreign invaders, so, in the myth of *nam tiến*, a series of contingent events was rewritten as a "linear progression," leading to the establishment of a sovereign Vietnamese nation. In the *nam tiến*, a succession "of different episodes responding to particular events" was transformed into an historical teleology, an "essentialized preordained sequence by which the 'Vietnam' of the 10th century became the 'Vietnam' of today."[101]

Appropriating this part of the national history (as it was imagined in the colonial era), Republican leaders conceived of the counterinsurgency strategy as an historical and geographical extension of the Southward Advance. As Ngô Đình Nhu explained in an interview, Republican leaders sought to "position the strategic hamlet policy within the historical movement of the Vietnamese People [*vận động lịch sử của Dân tộc Việt Nam*] over these past two thousand years."[102] For Nhu, programs such as the agrovilles and Strategic Hamlet Campaign (*Ấp Chiến lược*) were not merely security measures, used to contain the insurgency in the countryside. Rather, they represented the "next frontier in the story of struggle, [a new] … stage of Vietnamese history," an historical sequel to the Southward Advance. In that sense, "the national policy of strategic hamlets," as Nhu described, would be "the quintessence of our truest traditions."[103]

In this historical sequel, the march south (as the quintessential nationalist myth of an ancient Vietnamese people, fulfilling its manifest destiny by expanding its territorial sovereignty) would be accompanied by a "march toward progress" or political and economic modernity. As a modern reenactment of the Southward Advance, the campaign of forced relocation would realize "our truest traditions," while at the same time establishing "an authentically Vietnamese route to modernity."[104]

This ideal of modernity, however, would no longer be that of a Western democracy, for which the South Vietnamese would be required to wait. The Strategic Hamlet Program, in other words, was not an autocratic means for establishing what Nolting described as "the long-range aim of a self-representative … democratic system." Unlike its American ally, the Republic was not committed to the goal of creating a bastion of liberal democracy. Rather, like their counterparts in the Communist Party, the Republican leaders would come to repudiate the latter as a bourgeois

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 42 15/08/2019 11:28

ideology, one that they would seek to abolish by means of a revolutionary transformation of the economic and political infrastructure in the South. This transformation was identified by the creation of a "real democracy from the base," which was directly opposed to both free market capitalism and liberal democracy.[105]

In contrast, however, to the revolution waged by the Communist Party, the ultimate aim of this program, as it evolved under the combined pressure of the insurgency and US imperialism, was not the establishment of a socialism controlled by the state. For the leaders of the early Republic, such a socialism remained within the framework of a Western modernity in which the establishment of individual rights required the development of a disciplinary apparatus deployed by a centralized state. South Vietnamese leaders, therefore, would attempt to create a stateless form of modernity based on a direct "democracy from the base."[106] To that end, the Ngos would pursue the apparently contradictory program of employing the discipline or dictatorial power of the central government to establish a decentralized system of politically autonomous rural communities. This autonomy, in turn, would serve to dissolve the centralized power that was used to create it.

In contrast to the role of disciplinary power in Foucault's account of the dark side of modernity, the aim of the Republican program of national discipline was not the creation of a representative regime supported by a system of panoptic surveillance. The object, in other words, was not to establish a popular sovereignty based upon the subjection of the people to the disciplinary mechanisms of the state and the capitalist economy. The "national people" (*dân tộc*) that the Republican leaders attempted to mold through their program of national discipline, then, would not be the citizens of a liberal democracy, endowed with individual rights (rights that were abrogated by the extrajuridical forms of coercion deployed by the government). Rather, the goal of the early Republic was to create a stateless community of "persons" (*nhân vị*), liberated by means of a "communal discipline" (*kỷ luật tập thể*) from the impersonal rule of the market as well as the sovereignty of the state and its power of discipline.[107] "National discipline," then, would serve to establish a decentralized system of direct democracy and communal production, whose political autonomy would preempt the authority of the national government. The stateless community, created through the program of national disciple, would serve, therefore, to *dissolve the nation itself*, along with the principle of national sovereignty, as an inheritance of the colonial government.

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 43 15/08/2019 11:28

If the war, then, was portrayed by the Communist Party as an attempt to realize the myth of a 2,000-year struggle for national sovereignty, for the Republican leaders, on the other hand, it was as a second Southward Advance toward a non-nationalistic form of modernity. In this program, the dissemination of a national culture through the vernacular media would be used as a means of imagining a stateless form of community, beyond the idea of the nation. Toward the end of the early Republic, moreover, South Vietnamese leaders would attempt to utilize this stateless community as an instrument for opposing the American government, whose intervention, in the early 1960s, would begin to assume the character of neocolonial enterprise.

Notes

1 Nguyen An Ninh, "La France et l'Indochine," *Europe*, 8:31 (July 15, 1925), 262. On Nguyễn An Ninh's career, see Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
2 Nguyễn An Ninh. *Tuyển Chọn Các Tác Phẩm*. [Selected Works] (Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà Xuất Bản Trẻ, 1996), 56, 81.
3 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 152.
4 Ibid., 148.
5 Ibid., 225.
6 Ibid., 160–3.
7 Ibid., 167.
8 Ibid., 155.
9 Nguyễn An Ninh, *Tuyển Chọn Các Tác Phẩm,* 81.
10 Dương Quảng Hàm, *Leçons d'histoire d'Annam* (Hanoi: Le Van TAN, 1936), 5.
11 Quoted in Judith Henchy, "Performing Modernity in the Writings of Nguyễn An Ninh and Phan Văn Hùm" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2005), 61–2.
12 Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991),107.
13 Philip Durkin, "Etymology, World History, and the Grouping and Division of Material in Historical Dictionaries," in *The Oxford Handbook of Lexicography*, ed. Philip Durkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 243; Alexandre de Rhodes's *Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum*, which was the first trilingual Vietnamese–Portuguese–Latin dictionary, published in Rome in 1651, does not contain an entry for "culture" in either Latin or Vietnamese.

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 44 15/08/2019 11:28

14 Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity– China, 1900–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 240.
15 Tze-ki Hon, *The Allure of the Nation: The Cultural and Historical Debates in Late Qing and Republican China* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2015), 85.
16 Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 107.
17 Ibid.
18 Tze-Ki Hon, "Cultural identity and local self-government: A study of Liu Yizheng's 'History of Chinese Culture'," *Modern China*, 30:4 (October 2004), 518.
19 Nguyễn Đình Hoà defines *Cầm kỳ thi họa* (in Chinese, *Qin Qi Shu Hua*) as "the four sophisticated pastimes," *Vietnamese–English Student Dictionary* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), 57. Under the Nguyễn dynasty in the nineteenth century, *cầm kỳ thi họa* was viewed as "vehicles for the Way" (*văn dĩ tái đạo*). Phương Lựu, "*Khái quát về quan niệm văn học Nho giáo ở Việt Nam*" (Outline of Confucian literary concepts in Vietnam), in *Nho giáo ở Việt Nam* (Confucianism in Vietnam) (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản khoa học xã hội, 2006), 393–427.
20 See Liam Kelley, "Vietnam as a 'domain of manifest civility' (*Văn Hiến Chi Bang*)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 34:1 (2003), 63–76. *Việt Nam văn hóa sử cương* (An Outline of Vietnamese Culture) (Huế: Quan Hải tùng thư, 1938) by historian and lexicographer Đào Duy Anh, was perhaps the most influential attempt during the colonial period to expound the new concept of culture. Đào Duy Anh's text draws on the work of the Chinese Marxist historian Yang Dongchun, who rejected the exclusive identification of culture with the noble civilization and "scholarly ideas" of the Confucian elite. According to Yang Dongchun, this narrow conception of culture implied that "savage peoples" (*dã man dân*) were devoid of culture, which he argued was clearly untrue. For Đào Duy Anh, similarly, culture is not "by nature something lofty and special." Rejecting what Ninh referred to as the "erroneous" identification of culture with the forms of civility practiced by the Confucian literati, Đào Duy Anh argued that "'culture' simply refers to all of the means of life of human beings, and therefore we can say: Culture is life (*văn hóa tức là sinh hoạt*)." See Liam Kelley, "Đào Duy Anh and ROC Intellectual Influence in Colonial Vietnam." https://leminhkhai.wordpress.com/2016/12/02/dao-duy-anh-and-roc-intellectual-influence-in-colonial-vietnam/. Last accessed July 2019.
21 Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chữ Viết Quốc Ngữ Thời Kỳ Đầu Pháp Thuộc* (The *Quốc Ngữ* Script in the Early French Colonial Period) (Sài Gòn: Sơn Nam Xuất Bản, 1974?), 119.
22 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 128.
23 Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chữ Vân Quốc Ngữ*, 119.

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 45 15/08/2019 11:28

24 CAOM, Indo/GGI/65409: Letter from Governor General to Minister of Colonies, September 15, 1915. See also Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chủ nghĩa thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam: Thực chất và huyền thoại* [French Colonialism in Vietnam: Reality and Myths] (Saigon: Nam Sơn, 1963), 231.
25 CAOM (Aix). Indochine. Gouvemement Général 7 F22. L'Administrateur Chef du Service de la Sûreté a M. le Gouvemeur de la Cochinchine. "*Objet: Sûreté Politique*." Saigon, 2 April 1921.
26 Shawn McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 34.
27 See also David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 137.
28 Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, 183.
29 Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chữ Vân Quốc Ngữ*, 119–20.
30 Ibid., 123.
31 CAOM (Aiz). Indochine. Gouvernement général 7 F22. L'Administrateur Chef du Service de la Sûreté à M. le Gouverneur de la Cochinchine. "Object Sûreté Politique." Saigon, April 2, 1921.
32 See Benedict Anderson's discussion of the role of print media in the rise of nationalism in Vietnam in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 130.
33 Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 172.
34 See Liam C. Kelley, "Imagining the Nation in Twentieth Century Vietnam," presented at the fourth Engaging with Vietnam: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue Conference in Honolulu, November 8, 2012.
35 Phan Bội Châu, *Phan Bội Châu toàn tập*. Volume 3 [Complete Works] (Huế: Nhà xuất bản T[illegible] hóa, 2001), 68.
36 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1974), 312.
37 See Neil L. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 172.
38 See, for example, Phạm Quỳnh Phương, *Hero and Deity: Trần Hưng Đạo and the Resurgence of Popular Religion in Vietnam* (Chiang Mai: Mekong Press, 2009) and Liam C. Kelley, "From moral exemplar to national hero."
39 Phạm Văn Đồng, *Về văn hóa và văn học nghệ thuật* [On Culture and Literary Arts] (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Văn học, 2006), 381.
40 According to Alexander Vuving, texts like Lý Thường Kiệt's "Mountains and Rivers of the Southern Court" (*Nam quốc sơn hà nam*) and Nguyễn Trãi's "Proclamation of the Pacification of the Marauding Ngô" (*Bình Ngô đại cáo*), written in the tenth and fifteenth centuries, were not "declarations of independence" (*Tuyên ngôn độc lập*). They expressed concepts of "polity" that were different from the one proclaimed in Hồ Chí Minh's declaration in 1945. See Alexander Vuving, "The references of Vietnamese states and the mechanisms of world formation," *Asien*, 79 (April 2001), 62–86.

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 46 15/08/2019 11:28

41 *Tuyên ngôn độc lập năm 1945 của Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh*: *những giá trị và ý nghĩa thời đại* [President Hồ Chí Minh's 1945 Declaration of Independence: values and meanings of the times] (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Chính trị Quốc gia, 1996), 44.
42 Indochina Monographs – Intelligence. VCA. 1070821001 January 1, 1982. Box 08, Folder 21. Glenn Helm Collection.
43 Trãi Nguyễn, *Thơ văn Nguyễn Trãi* [Poetry of Trãi Nguyễn], (Hà Nội: Văn Học, 1980), 25.
44 Liam C. Kelley, "Who Were the Representatives of the People in the "Bình Ngô đại cáo"?" https://leminhkhai.wordpress.com/2016/08/08/3-the-bndc-series-who-were-the-representatives-of-the-people-in-the-binh-ngo-dai-cao/. Last accessed July 21, 2019.
45 Quoted in Bửu Lịch, "Les idéologies dans la République du Sud Vietnam 1954–1975" (Ph.D. dissertation, Université de Paris VII, 1983/1984), 36.
46 Trãi Nguyễn, *Thơ văn Nguyễn Trãi*, 25.
47 Ibid.
48 Liam C. Kelley, "From moral exemplar to national hero: the transformations of Trần Hưng Đạo and the emergence of Vietnamese nationalism," *Modern Asian Studies*, 49:6, 1989.
49 Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chữ Vân Quốc Ngữ*, 127.
50 William S. Turley, *The Second Indochina War: A Concise Political and Military History*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 9, 10. See also Patricia M. Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 159.
51 Pierre Asselin, *Vietnam's American War: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 17–18.
52 Hoàng Đạo Thành, *Việt sử tân ước toàn biên* [Complete Compilation of the New Testament of Việt History] (1906), A. 1507., tự 1a-1b.
53 CAOM (Aiz). Indochine. Gouvernement général 7 F22. L'Administrateur Chef du Service de la Sûreté à M. le Gouverneur de la Cochinchine. "Object Sûreté Politique." Saigon, April 2, 1921.
54 Fannon, 225.
55 Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Chữ Vân Quốc Ngữ*,120.
56 Ibid., 123.
57 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977), 30
58 Mộng Lang Trần, *Hiến pháp Việt Nam: từ năm 1946 đến năm 2001* [Vietnamese Constitutions: 1946–2001) (Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh: Nhà xuất bản Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2002), 126.
59 Văn An Lê, *Tổ-chức hành-chánh Việt-Nam* [Administrative Organization in Vietnam] (Sài Gòn: Học-viện quốc-gia hành-chánh, 1963), 96.
60 Huy Đỗ, Hữu Ái Lê, *Tìm hiểu tư tưởng văn hóa nghệ thuật Hồ Chí Minh*

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 47 15/08/2019 11:28

[Understanding Hồ Chí Minh's thinking on culture and art] (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1995), 82, 60.

61 *Tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh về Đảng cộng sản Việt Nam* [Thoughts of Hồ Chí Minh on the Vietnamese Communist Party] (Hà Nội: Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 94.

62 Quoted in *Tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh về phát triển văn hóa và con người* [Thoughts of Hồ Chí Minh on Cultural and Human Development] (Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 295.

63 Dương Thu Hương, *Tiểu thuyết vô đề* [Novel Without a Name] (Stanton, USA: nhà xuất bản Văn Nghệ).

64 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 217.

65 Trần Đức Thảo, *Những lời trăn trối* [Final Testaments] (Arlington, VA: Tổ hợp Xuất bản Miền Đông Hoa Kỳ, 2014), 264.

66 Trần Đức Thảo, *Những lời trăn trối*, 264–5.

67 Ibid., 265.

68 Ibid.

69 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb (London: Rebel Press), 32.

70 Trần Đức Thảo, *Những lời trăn trối*, 262.

71 On RVN efforts to create a cult of personality for Diem, see John C. Donnell, "National renovation campaigns in Vietnam," *Pacific Affairs*, 32 (March 1959), 56–63.

72 Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 290.

73 See, for example, Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 52–6.

74 John Osborne, "The tough miracle man of Vietnam," *Life* 42 (May 13, 1957), 157. On Diệm's early career as an administrator, see Bernard Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 239.

75 Edward Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 20–1.

76 Eric M. Bergerud, *The Dynamics of Defeat: The Vietnam War in Hau Nghia Province* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 35.

77 Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 153.

78 Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: Vietnam at War* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 1150.

79 Lương Khải Minh and Cao Thế Dung, *Làm thế nào để giết một tổng thống? tập 1* [How to kill a president, vol. 1] (Sài Gòn: Nhà xuất bản Hòa Bình, 1970), 194–5.

80 Jacqueline Willemetz, *La République du Viêt*-Nam,18.

81 Đào Thị Diến. "*Nhà lưu trữ Việt Nam thời kì* 1938–1946." [Ngô Đình

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 48 15/08/2019 11:28

Nhu: Vietnamese Archivist 1938–1946]. Tạp chí Nghiên cứu và Phát triển [Journal of Research and Development], 6–7 (104–5), 2013, 239.

82 Văn Luận Cao, *Bên giòng lịch sử* [Riding Our History Currents], *1940–1965* (Sài Gòn: Trí Dũng, 1972), 180–9. See also John L. Sorenson and David K. Pack, *Unconventional Warfare and the Vietnamese Society* (China Lake, California, U.S. Naval Ordinance Test Station, 1964), 4. On Nhu's organizing activities, see Hà Kim Phương, "Tìm Hiểu Ngô Đình Nhu Trong Khía Cạnh Một Nhà Trí Thức." [Understanding Ngô Đình Nhu as an Intellectual] Luutruvn.com, 11 February 2015, luutruvn.com/index.php/2015/11/02/tim-hieu-ngo-dinh-nhu-trong-khia-canh-mot-nha-tri-thuc/#_ftnref15. Last accessed July 21, 2019. On Nhu's involvement in the conferences on Christian social doctrine, organized during the 1950s by Fernand Parrel, which informed Nhu's views on Personalism, see Trịnh Trần Nguyễn O.P. "*Lớp Huấn Luyện Xã Hội Công Giáo*." [A Lesson on the Christian Social Doctrine]. *Đạo Binh Đức Mẹ* [The Legion of Mary], August, 1952, 8, 13.

83 Michael Field, *The Prevailing Wind: Witness in Indochina* (London: Methuen, 1965), 152.

84 "Vietnam: A Television History; America's Mandarin (1954 - 1963); Interview with Frederick Nolting, 1981." 04/30/1981. WGBH Media Library & Archives. Web. July 21, 2019. http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/V_A2513CA622CC4C8E8454EB2B1F7F5A0C Last accessed July 21, 2019.

85 *President Ngo Dinh Diem on Democracy* (*Addresses relative to the Constitution*) (Saigon: Press Office, 1958, 31–2.

86 Memorandum of a Conversation, Saigon, January 30, 1958. See also Ngô Đình Nhu, "Industrialization: prerequisite to self-sufficiency," *Times of Vietnam Magazine*, 5:18 (May 5, 1963), 4–5.

87 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 222.

88 Ibid., 216–17.

89 Ibid., 222.

90 *President Ngo Dinh Diem on Democracy*, 31

91 Philip Catton, *Diem's Final Failure* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 14.

92 Despatch From the Chargé in Vietnam (Elting) to the Department of State, Saigon, July 30, 1959.

93 Catton, *Diem's Final Failure*, 49.

94 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 8.

95 Phạm Văn Lưu, *Chính Quyền Ngô Dình Diệm 1954–1963: Chủ Nghĩa và Hành Động* [The Government of Ngô Dình Diệm 1954–1963: Personalism and Action.] (Melbourne: Centre For Vietnamese Studies Publications, 2017), 30–1.

96 Catton, *Diem's Final Failure*, 90. See also Tùng Phong (Ngô Đình Nhu).

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 49 15/08/2019 11:28

Chính Đề Việt Nam (Political Solution for Vietnam) (Saigon: Nhà xuất bản Đồng-Nai, 1965), 266.

97 Paper – The Political Factor in Pacification: A Vietnam Case Study [Draft], 4. VCA. 21470122001 No Date. Box 01, Folder 22. Vincent Puritano Collection.

98 Catton, *Diem's Final Failure*, 118.

99 Claudine Ang. "Regionalism in southern narratives of Vietnamese history: The case of the "Southern Advance" [*Nam Tiến*], *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 8:3 (Summer 2013), 8.

100 Tana Li, *Nguyen Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, SEAP Publications, 1998), 19.

101 Ibid. On the myth of the *nam tiến*, see Brian Zottoli, "Reconceptualizing Southern Vietnamese History from the 15th to 18th Centuries: Competition along the Coasts from Guangdong to Cambodia" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011), 3, 13, 393–9.

102 ~~"Cuộc nói chuyện thân mật với cán bộ ấp chiến lược của ông cố vấn chính trị Ngô Đình Nhu," ngày 17/4/1963, Việt Nam Cộng Hòa (1963), Trung tâm Lưu trữ quốc gia II [KHTL 6324].~~

103 See Nhu's account of the *nam tiến* in Tùng Phong (Ngô Đình Nhu), *Chính Đề Việt Nam*, 245–52.

104 Catton, *Diem's Final Failure*, 118.

105 *Press interviews with President Ngo Dinh Diem, Political Counselor Ngo Dinh Nhu* (Saigon: Republic of Vietnam, 1963), 71.

106 Ibid.

107 Tùng Phong (Ngô Đình Nhu), *Chính Đề Việt Nam* (Political Solution for Vietnam), 391.

NGUYEN 9781526143969 PRINT.indd 50 15/08/2019 11:28